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(54) **THREE STAGE FORMING STATION AND METHOD FOR FORMING A HOT GLASS SHEET WITH TRANSVERSE CURVATURE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 94 days.

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(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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(57)

ABSTRACT

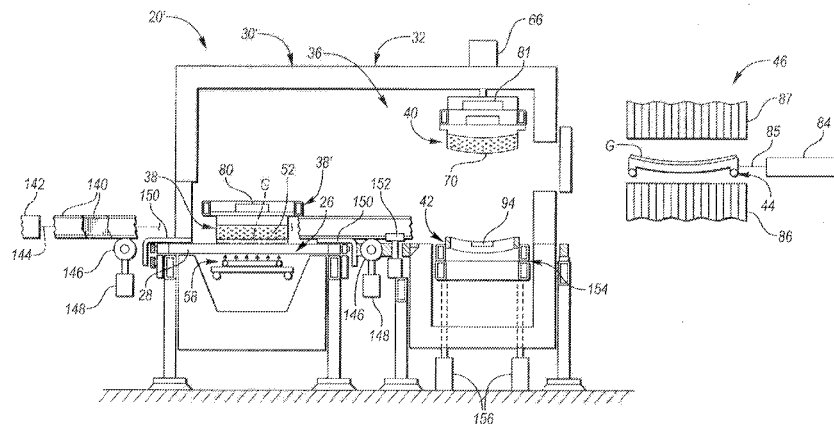
(51) **Int. Cl.**
C03B 23/03 (2006.01)
C03B 23/025 (2006.01)
C03B 23/035 (2006.01)
C03B 35/20 (2006.01)

A glass sheet three stage forming station utilizes first and second upper molds and a lower mold to provide three stage forming. The glass is curved on the upper mold in the first stage but retains straight line elements transverse to the curvature. Transfer of the initially formed glass sheet from the first upper mold to the lower mold then provides the second stage of gravity forming and the glass sheet is then press formed between the second upper mold and the lower mold in the third stage which reduces optical distortion in the central viewing area of the formed glass sheet. The glass sheet is moved horizontally on the first upper mold and released onto the lower mold.

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **C03B 23/025** (2013.01); **C03B 23/03** (2013.01); **C03B 23/0355** (2013.01); **C03B 23/0357** (2013.01); **C03B 35/202** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
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See application file for complete search history.

10 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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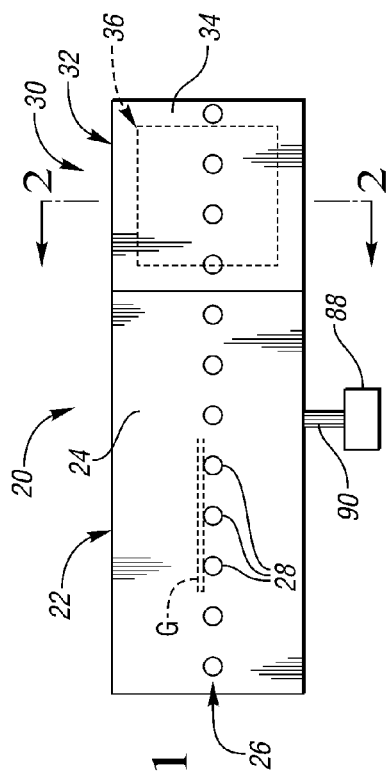


FIG. 1

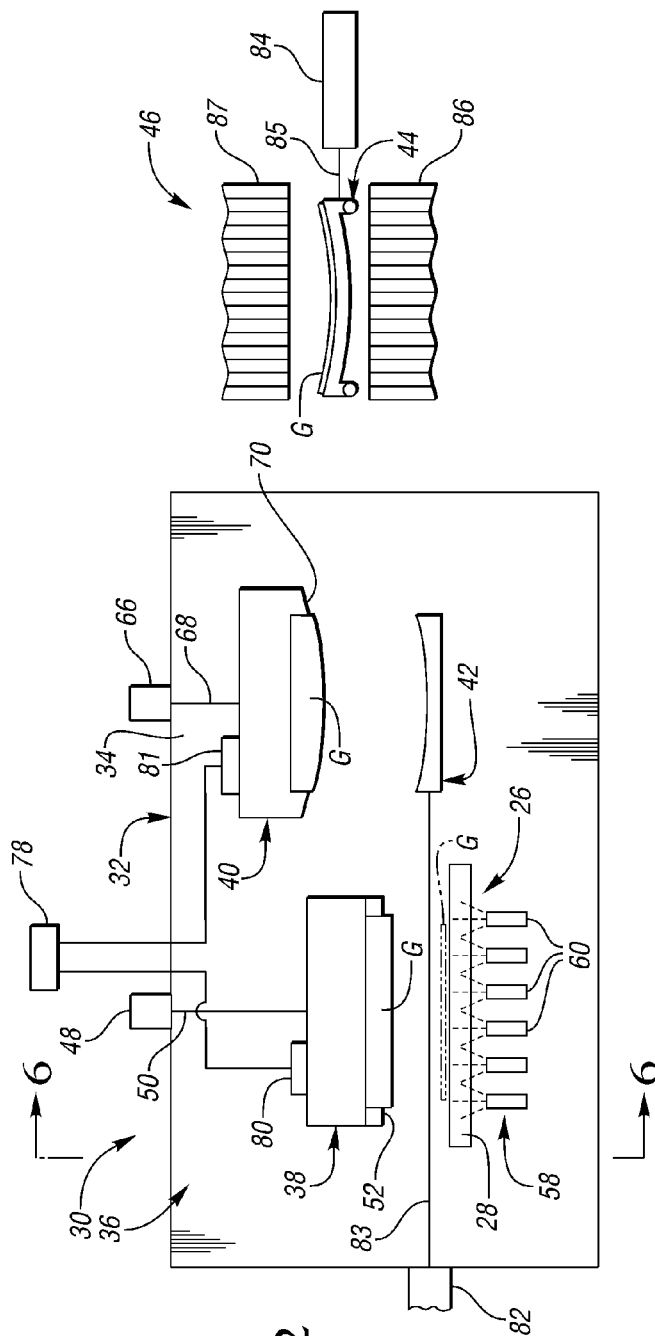


FIG. 2

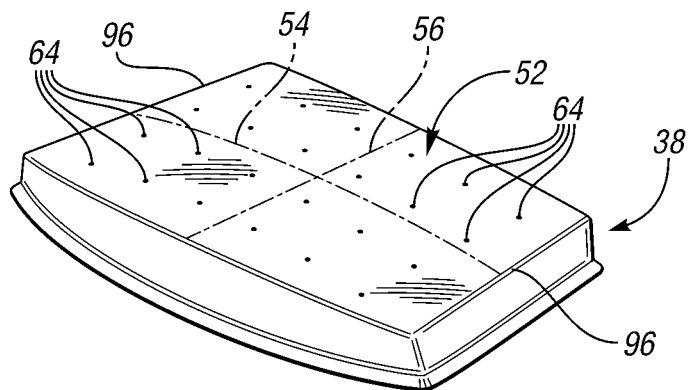


FIG. 3

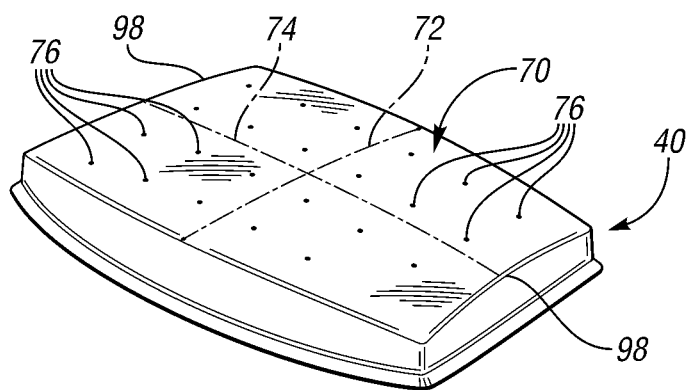


FIG. 4

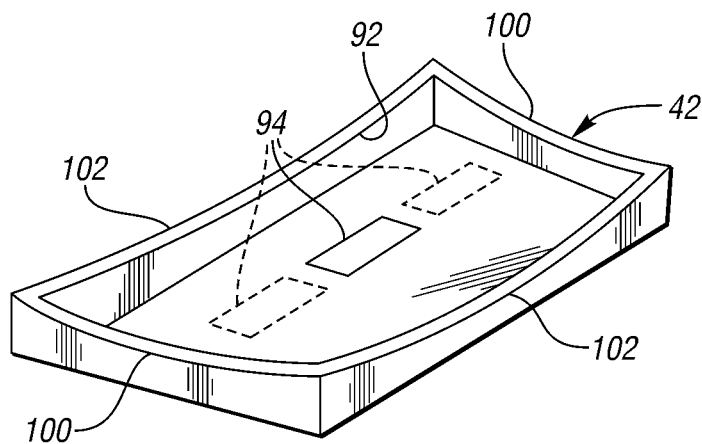


FIG. 5

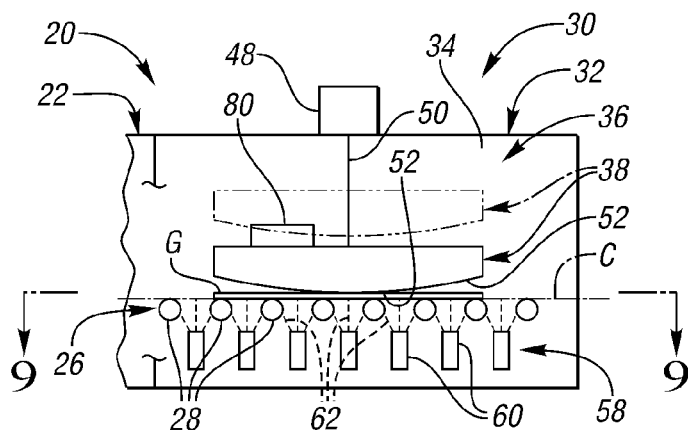


FIG. 6

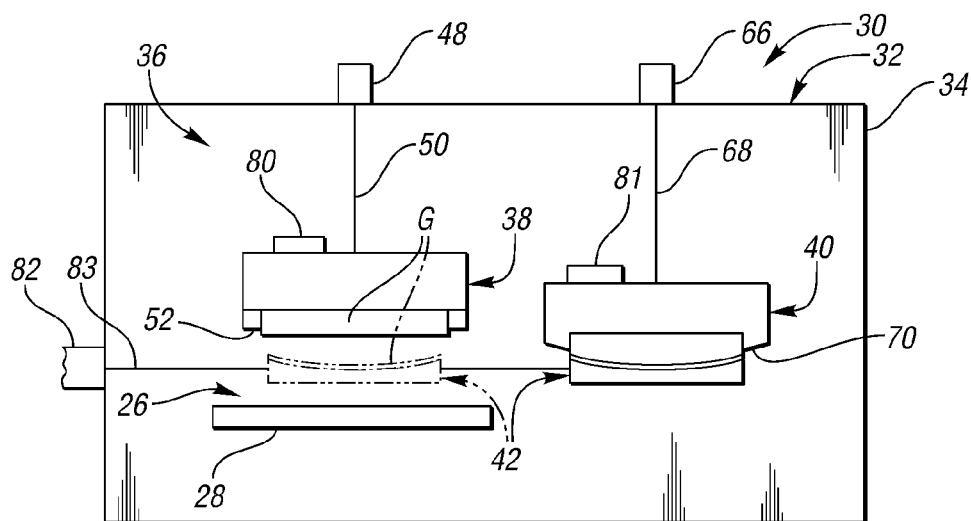


FIG. 7

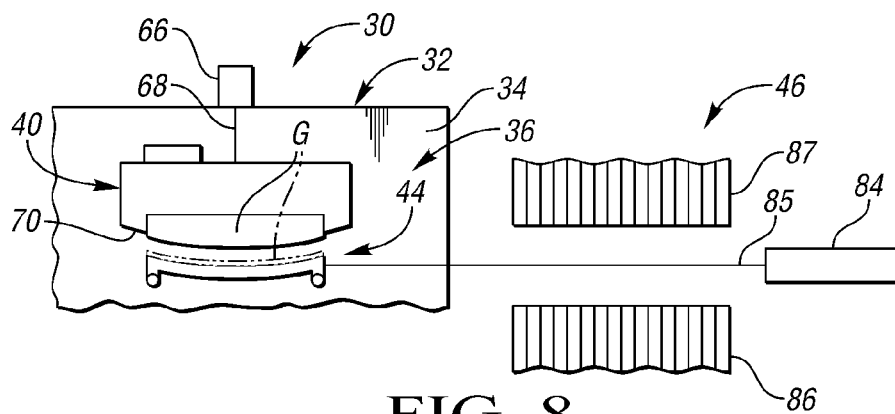


FIG. 8

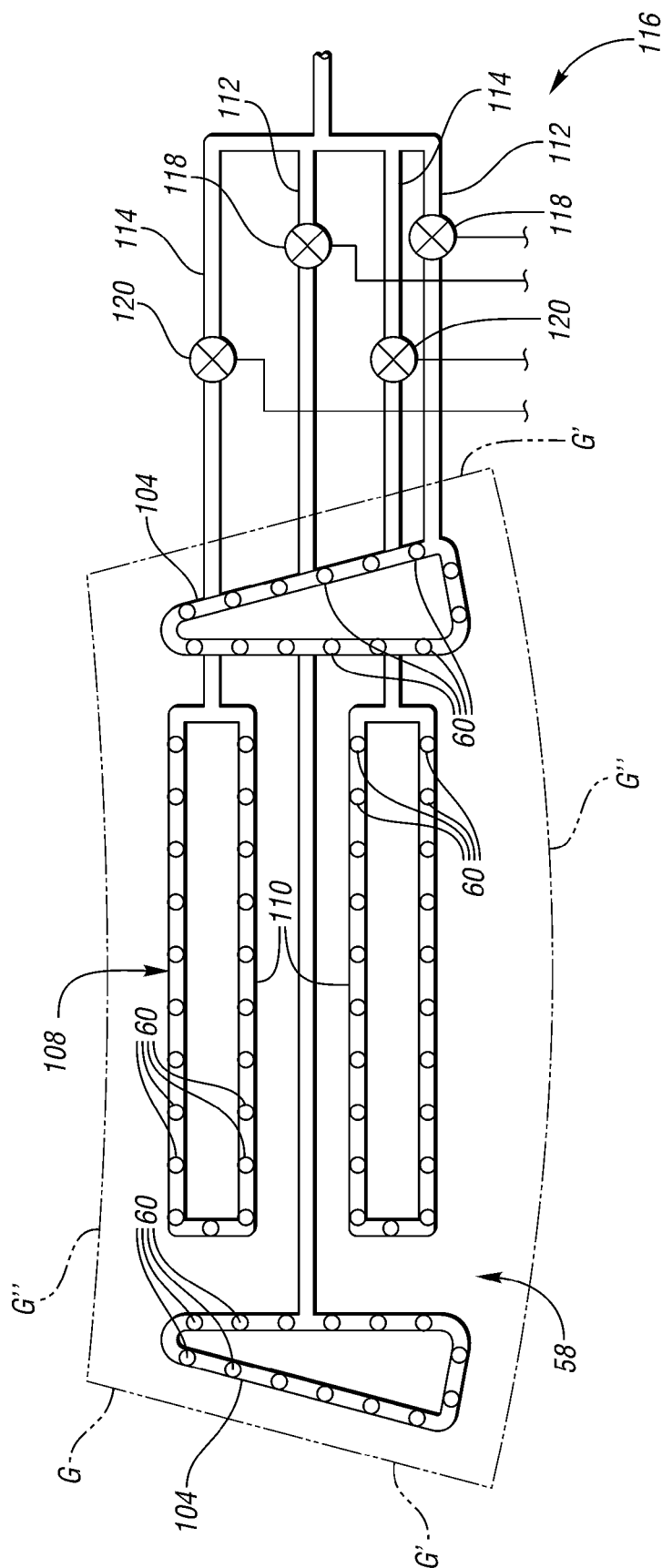


FIG. 9

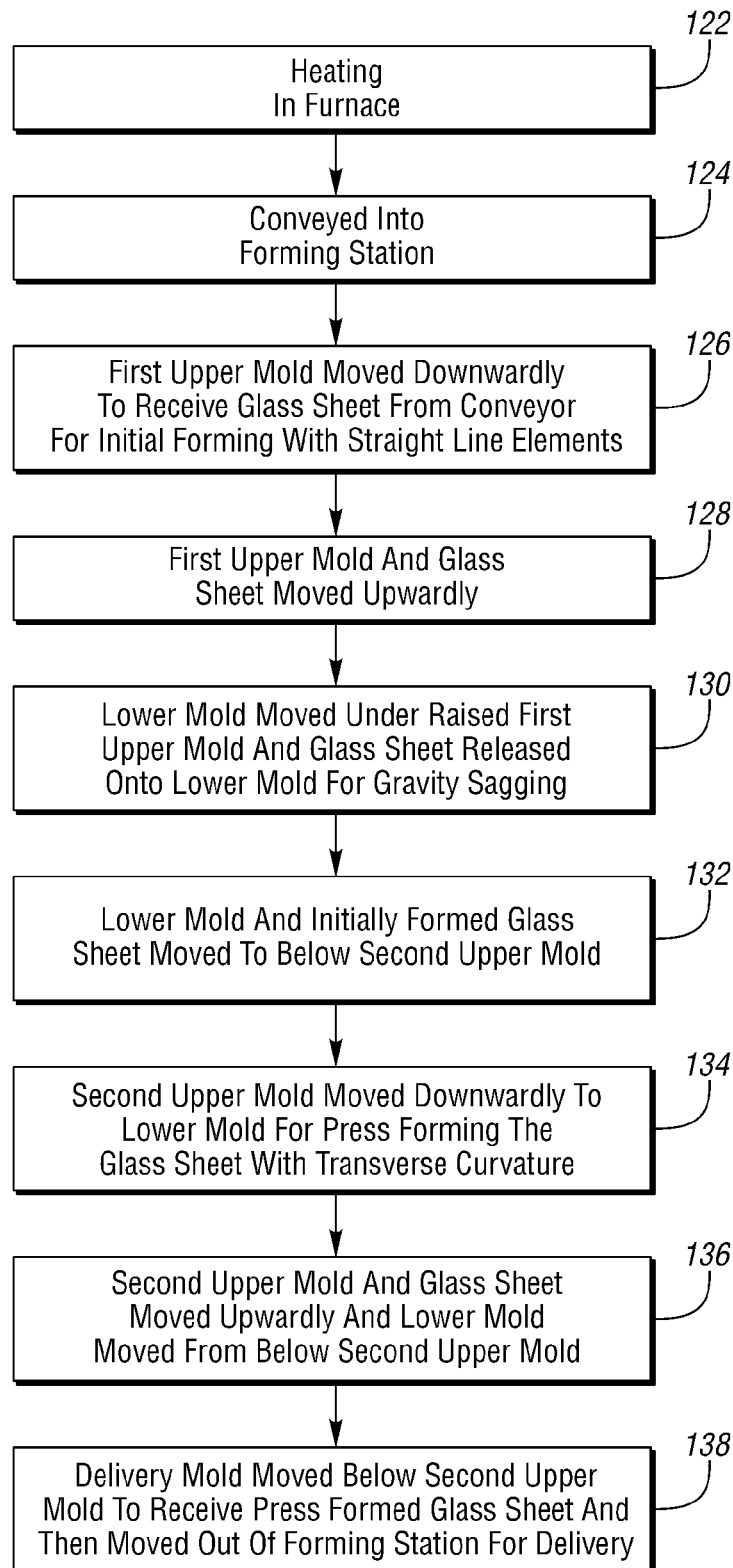


FIG. 10

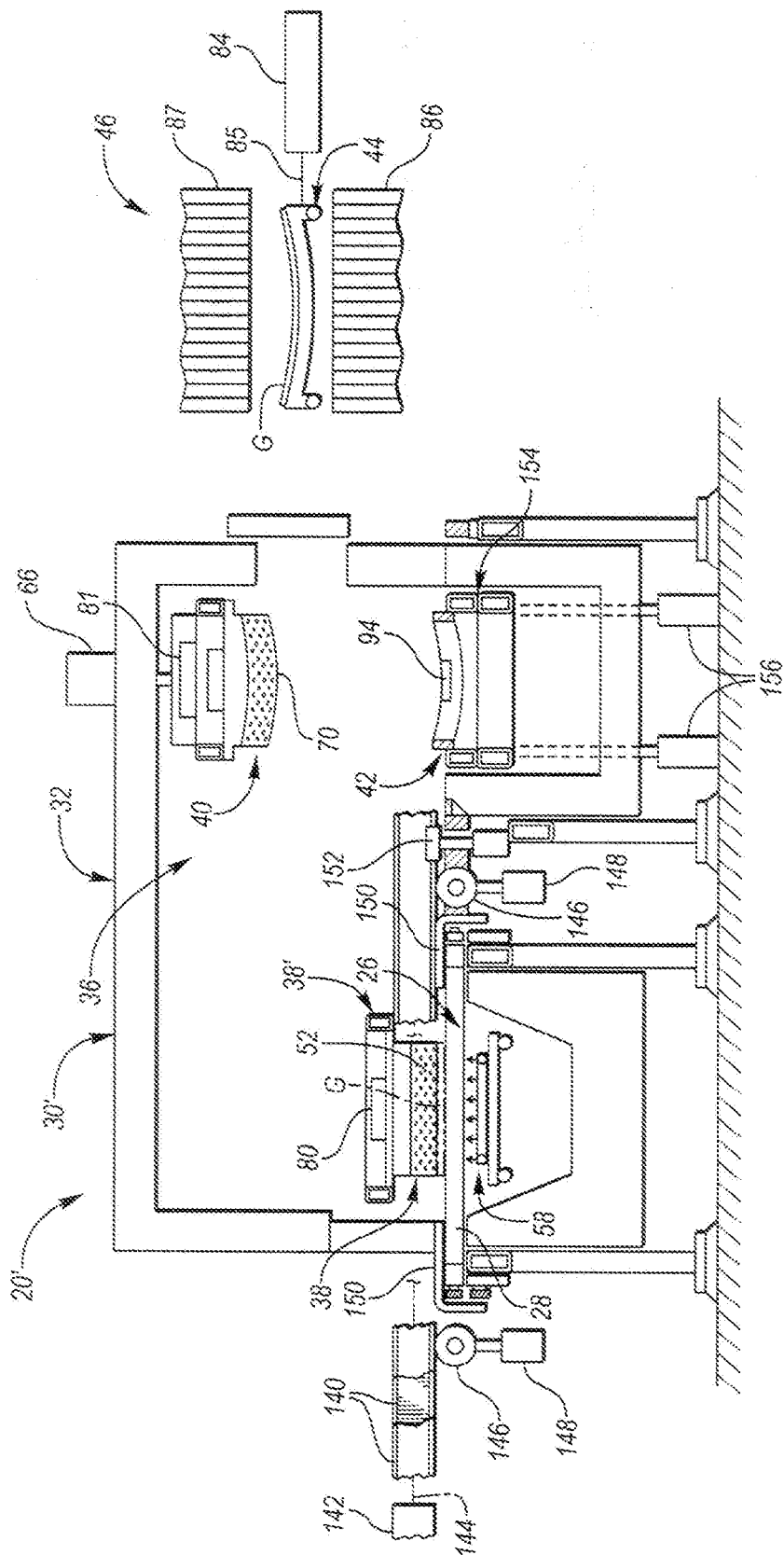


FIG. 11

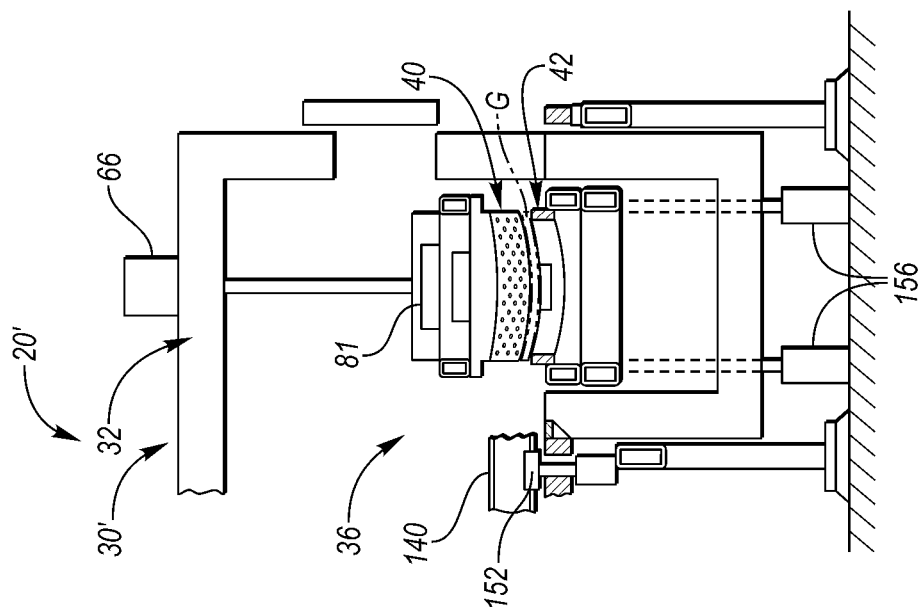


FIG. 13

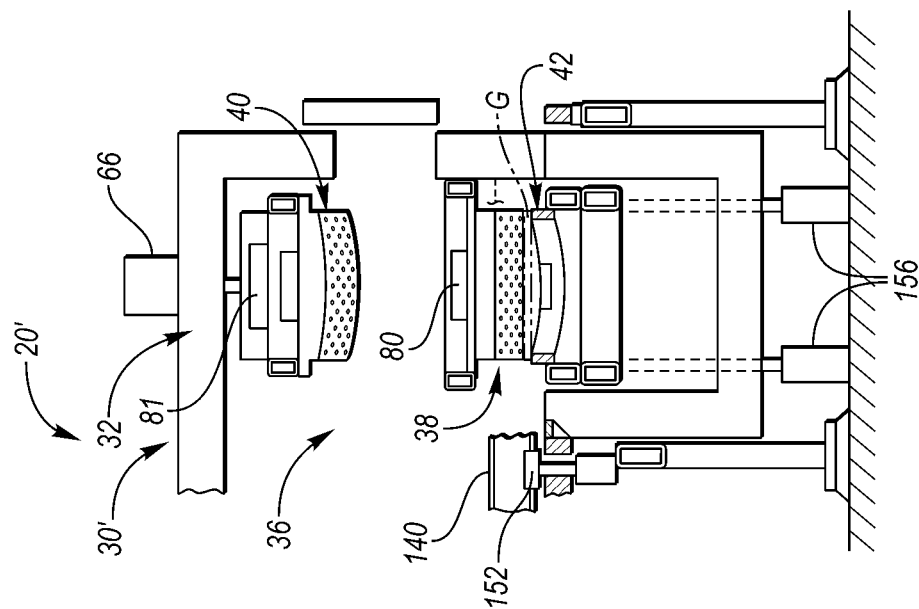


FIG. 12

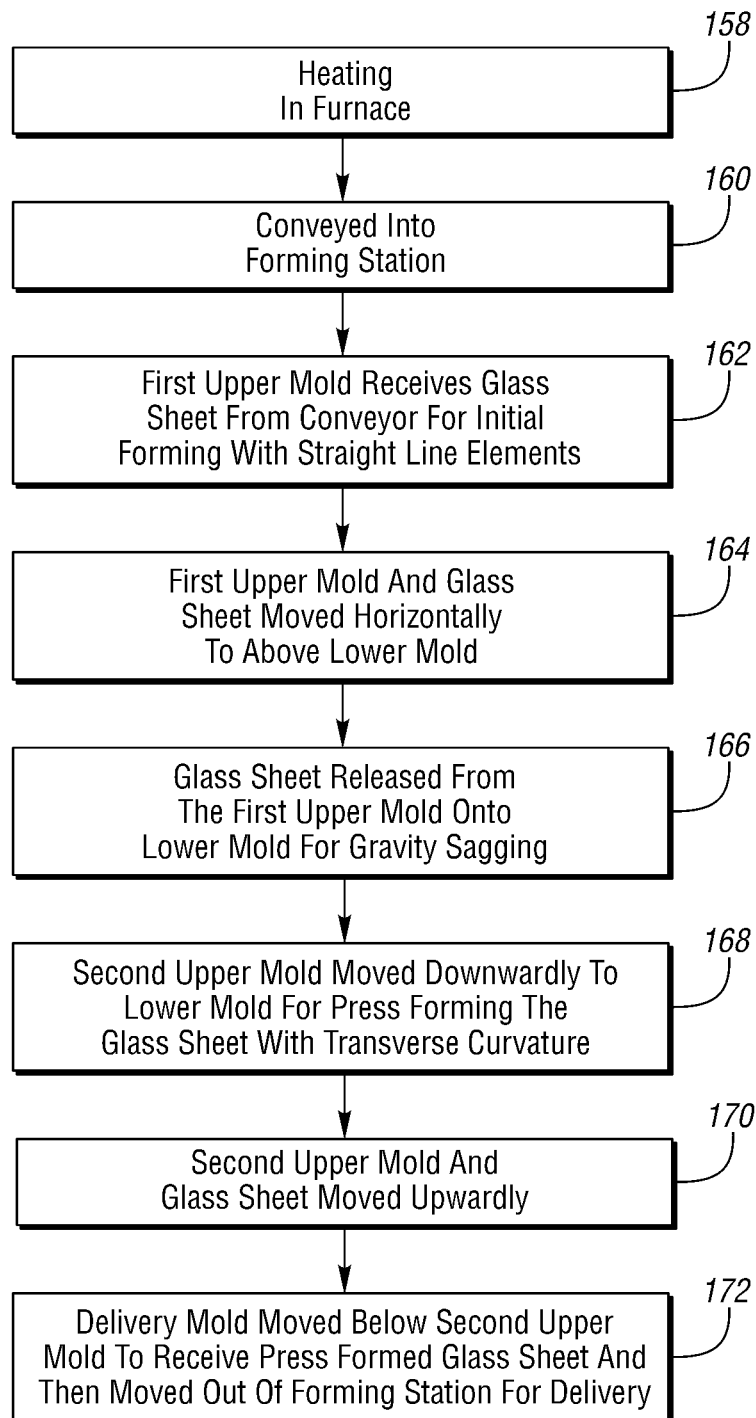


FIG. 14

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THREE STAGE FORMING STATION AND METHOD FOR FORMING A HOT GLASS SHEET WITH TRANSVERSE CURVATURE

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to a three stage forming station for forming a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature having improved optics.

BACKGROUND

U.S. Pat. No. 4,661,141 Nitschke et al. discloses a glass sheet press bending system for bending hot glass sheets by conveying a hot glass sheet to below an upper mold that is moved downwardly to receive a hot glass sheet and provide support thereof by upwardly directed gas jets supplied from below a plane of conveyance of a roll conveyor and by a vacuum drawn at the upper mold, and the upper mold is then moved upwardly with the glass sheet supported thereon by contact with two thirds or more of the downwardly facing surface along the length of the glass sheet. When glass sheets are formed with transverse curvature, i.e., curvature in directions that cross each other without any straight line elements, the periphery of the glass sheet has excess glass that can cause excess pressure between the mold and the glass sheet at the center of the glass sheet and thereby result in undesirable optics both as to reflection and to transmission in the central viewing area of the glass.

In connection with the type of system disclosed by the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 4,661,141, see also U.S. Pat. No. 5,900,034 Mumford et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 5,906,668 Mumford et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 5,917,107 Ducat et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 5,925,162 Nitschke et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 6,032,491 Nitschke et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 6,079,094 Ducat et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 6,173,587 Mumford et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 6,418,754 Nitschke et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 6,718,798 Nitschke et al.; and U.S. Pat. No. 6,729,160 Nitschke et al.

SUMMARY

An object of the present invention is to provide an improved forming station for three stage forming a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature.

In carrying out the above object, the three stage forming station constructed according to the invention includes a housing having a heated chamber and a roll conveyor for conveying the hot glass sheet into the heated chamber of the housing along a horizontal plane of conveyance. A downwardly facing first upper mold of the forming station has a pickup position above the roll conveyor in the heated chamber and has curvature in a first direction and straight line elements in a second direction transverse to the first direction, and the first upper mold initially forms the glass sheet with curvature in the first direction while maintaining straight line elements in the second direction. An upwardly facing lower mold of the forming station is located in the heated chamber spaced horizontal from the pickup position of the first upper mold and has curvature in the first direction and permits glass sheet curvature in the second direction, and the lower mold receives the glass sheet from the first upper mold in a delivery position thereof above the lower mold so the glass sheet sags under gravity along the second direction to have some curvature in the second direction as well as curvature in the first direction. A downwardly facing second upper mold of the forming station is located in the heated chamber above the lower mold and has transverse

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curvature and is complementary to the upwardly facing lower mold, and the second upper mold cooperates with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with transverse curvature corresponding to the shapes of the lower mold and the second upper mold. Elongated beams of the forming station support the first upper mold, rollers support the elongated beams and the first upper mold thereon for horizontal movement within the heated chamber, and a horizontal actuator moves the elongated beams horizontally on the rollers to move the first upper mold horizontally between the pickup position above the roll conveyor and the delivery position above the lower mold. A gas lift jet array located below the plane of conveyance supplies upwardly directed lift jets for lifting the glass sheet upwardly from the roll conveyor to the first upper mold when located in its pickup position to initially form and support the glass sheet on the first upper mold, and vertical actuators move the rollers, the elongated beams on the rollers, and the first upper mold vertically in the pickup position first downwardly toward the roll conveyor to facilitate the lifting of the glass sheet from the conveyor to the first upper mold and then upwardly to facilitate movement of the first upper mold on the elongated beams to the delivery position. A vacuum source of the forming station draws a vacuum at the first upper mold to support the initially formed glass sheet on the first upper mold for its movement from the pickup position to the delivery position where its vacuum is terminated to release the glass sheet onto the lower mold, the second upper mold is movable downwardly from an upper position to cooperate with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with curvature in transverse directions, and the second upper mold is subsequently movable upwardly to the upper position with the press formed glass sheet supported on the second upper mold by vacuum drawn by the vacuum source. A delivery mold of the forming station is movable to below the press formed glass sheet on the second upper mold in its upper position whereupon its vacuum is terminated and the glass sheet is released from the second upper mold onto the delivery mold which is then moved out of the forming station for delivery of the press formed glass sheet. A controller operates the roll conveyor, the first upper mold, the gas lift jet array, the second upper mold, the vacuum source, and the delivery mold to perform the press forming of the glass sheet and its delivery.

As disclosed, the controller is configured to operate the vacuum source to provide a vacuum to the first upper mold and thereby cooperate with the gas lift jet array in lifting the glass sheet from the roll conveyor into contact with the first upper mold for initial forming and support of the glass sheet. The controller disclosed is also configured so after the glass sheet is moved upwardly and contacts the first upper mold, it terminates the operation of the gas lift jet array while continuing to operate the vacuum source to provide the vacuum that is then the sole support of the glass sheet on the first upper mold.

The disclosed lower mold has a ring shape that supports the glass sheet as it sags by gravity and also includes a support pad within its ring shape to control sagging of the glass sheet.

The forming station as disclosed includes lateral rollers that contact the elongated beams to provide lateral positioning during movement of the first upper mold between its pickup position and its delivery position.

The disclosed forming station also includes screw jacks for moving the lower mold vertically.

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The forming station disclosed also includes a quench station to which the delivery mold moves the press formed glass sheet for quenching.

The objects, features and advantages of the present invention are readily apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment when taken in connection with the referenced drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic elevational view of a glass sheet processing system including a three stage forming station.

FIG. 2 is a sectional view taken through the forming station along the direction of line 2-2 in FIG. 1 and illustrates a forming apparatus that includes first and second upper molds, a lower mold and a delivery mold for performing three stage forming of a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the first upper mold with its normally downwardly forming convex surface shown facing generally upwardly for purposes of illustration.

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the second upper mold with its normally downwardly forming convex surface also shown facing generally upwardly for purposes of illustration.

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of the lower mold which receives the initially formed glass sheet from the first upper mold for gravity sagging and movement to below the second upper mold for subsequent press forming.

FIG. 6 is a view taken along the direction of line 6-6 of FIG. 2 to show the initial pickup of the hot glass sheet from the conveyor by the first upper mold for the initial forming.

FIG. 7 is an elevational view of the forming station taken in the same direction as FIG. 2 and illustrates the movement of the glass sheet on the lower mold from the first upper mold to below the second upper mold for the press forming with transverse curvature.

FIG. 8 is an elevational view taken in the same direction as FIG. 7 and illustrates the operation of the delivery mold for delivering the formed glass sheet from the forming station.

FIG. 9 is a plan view taken along the direction of line 9-9 in FIG. 6 to illustrate a gas lift jet array that operates to perform the initial pickup of the glass sheet from the conveyor by the first upper mold.

FIG. 10 is a flow chart that illustrates the three stage hot glass sheet forming operation.

FIG. 11 is a view taken in the same direction as FIG. 2 but illustrating another embodiment of a three stage forming station constructed according to this invention for providing three stage forming of a hot glass sheet.

FIGS. 12 and 13 are partial views of FIG. 11 illustrating the glass sheet processing during a cycle of operation of the system.

FIG. 14 is a flow chart that illustrates the three stage hot glass sheet forming operation of the forming station embodiment of FIGS. 11-13.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As required, a detailed embodiment of the present invention is disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiment is merely exemplary of the invention that may be embodied in various and alternative forms. The figures are not necessarily to scale; some features may be exaggerated or minimized to show details of particular components. Therefore, specific structural and functional

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details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a representative basis for teaching one skilled in the art to practice the present invention.

With reference to FIG. 1, a glass sheet forming system generally indicated by 20 includes a furnace 22 having a heating chamber 24 for providing a heated ambient for heating glass sheets. A conveyor 26 of the system conveys the heated glass sheet in a generally horizontally extending orientation and is preferably of the roll conveyor type including rolls 28 like those disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. 3,806,312 McMaster; U.S. Pat. No. 3,934,970 McMaster et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 3,947,242 McMaster et al.; and U.S. Pat. No. 3,994,711 McMaster et al. A three stage forming station 30 of the system 20 has a construction with a press forming somewhat similar to that of the disclosure of the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 4,661,141 and the other United States Patents set forth in the above Background section of this application. Furthermore, the forming station 30 has an insulated housing 32 defining a heated chamber 34 in which forming apparatus 36 of the forming station is located as also shown in FIG. 2.

As illustrated in FIG. 2, the glass sheet forming apparatus 36 includes a first upper mold 38 that functions during a first stage of the hot glass sheet forming, a second upper mold 40 that functions during a press forming stage of the hot glass sheet forming, a lower mold 42 that receives the glass sheet G from the first upper mold 38 for gravity sagging and moves the glass sheet from the first upper mold to the second upper mold 40 and cooperates with the second upper mold to provide the press forming, and a delivery mold 44 that receives the formed glass sheet from the second upper mold 40 for delivery from the forming station 30, which delivery is to a quench station 46 as disclosed.

With continuing reference to FIG. 2, a schematically indicated actuator 48 such as one or more cylinders has a connection(s) 50 to the first upper mold 38 to provide movement thereof between an upper position above the roll conveyor 26 and as shown in FIG. 6 a lower position adjacent the roll conveyor and a conveyed hot glass sheet G. The first upper mold 38 has a downwardly facing surface 52 which has a downwardly convex shape shown in FIG. 6 and illustrated by the phantom line 54 in FIG. 3. Mold surface 52 also has straight line elements such as illustrated by phantom line 56 and may be provided by a cylindrical shape or a partial conical shape.

A gas lift jet array 58 in the forming station as illustrated in FIG. 6 is located below the plane of conveyance C of the hot glass sheet and includes gas jet pumps 60 that supply upwardly directed gas jets 62 for lifting the glass sheet G upwardly from the roll conveyor 26 to initially form and support the glass sheet against the downwardly facing surface 52 of the first upper mold 38 which is then moved upwardly to its upper position with the glass sheet supported against its downwardly facing surface as shown in FIG. 2. The gas jet pumps 60 are of the type disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. 4,204,854 McMaster et al. and U.S. Pat. No. 4,356,018 McMaster et al. such that a primary gas flow therefrom induces a secondary gas flow many times the extent of the primary gas flow in order to provide the lifting. A downwardly facing surface 52 of the first upper mold 38 also has an array of vacuum holes 64 through which a vacuum may be drawn to also provide initial lifting of the glass sheet and to then support the glass sheet as is hereinafter described.

As shown in FIG. 2, the second upper mold 40 is spaced horizontally within the heated chamber 34 of the forming station housing 32 and is movable vertically by an actuator 66 and a connection 68 like the actuator and connection

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associated with the first upper mold **38**. This vertical movement of the second upper mold **40** is between an upper position located above the elevation of the plane of conveyance and a lower position (FIG. 7) closer to the elevation of the plane of conveyance. The second upper mold **40** has a downwardly facing surface **70** of a downwardly convex shape with curvature in transverse directions without any straight line elements as shown by the curved phantom lines **72** and **74** in FIG. 4. The second upper mold **40** also has an array of vacuum holes **76** in its downwardly facing surface **70** for forming and supporting the heated glass sheet against the second upper mold during the forming cycle.

It should also be mentioned that the first and second upper molds **38** and **40** can also be moved upwardly and downwardly at the same time by a single actuator instead of separate actuators.

As shown in FIG. 2, a schematically indicated vacuum source **78** is disclosed as operable to provide a vacuum at the downwardly facing surfaces **52** and **70** of the first and second upper molds **38** and **40**. Actually, this source of vacuum can be provided by positive pressure air supplied to gas jet pumps **80** and **81** on the first and second upper molds **38** and **40** and are preferably of the type disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. 4,202,681 McMaster and U.S. Pat. No. 4,222,763 McMaster so as to be capable of drawing greater and lesser extents of vacuums as well as providing positive pressure air for providing glass sheet release during the forming operation as is hereinafter more fully described.

The lower mold **42** as best illustrated in FIG. 5 faces upwardly with an upwardly concave shape in transverse directions complementary to the downwardly convex shape of the downwardly facing surface **70** of the second upper mold **40**. This lower mold **42** is movable by an actuator **82** and connection **83** horizontally within the heated chamber **34** of the forming station housing **32** at a location above the plane of conveyance of the glass sheet to below the first upper mold **38** in its upper position as shown in FIG. 7 with the glass sheet supported against its downwardly facing surface **52**. The first upper mold **38** is then movable downwardly to release the glass sheet for transfer onto the lower mold **42**. The release of the glass sheet can be provided by the termination of the vacuum drawn and the termination of the upwardly directed gas jets provided by the gas jet array **58** previously described, as well as by providing positive pressure gas to the mold surface **52**. The first upper mold **38** is then moved upwardly to its upper position and the lower mold **42** and the glass sheet supported thereon are moved horizontally to below the second upper mold **40** while in its upper position as shown in FIG. 2. During this movement, the glass sheet sags by gravity toward the shape of the lower mold **42** with curvature in transverse directions. The second upper mold **40** is then moved downwardly from its upper position shown in FIG. 2 to its lower position shown in FIG. 7 to cooperate with the lower mold **42** to press form the glass sheet with curvature in transverse directions, and the second upper mold then has a vacuum drawn at its downwardly facing surface **70** to support the glass sheet and is moved upwardly to its upper position shown in FIG. 8.

The glass forming operation continues by the lower mold **42** being moved out from under the second upper mold **40** and back under the first upper mold **38** as shown by phantom line representation in FIG. 7, while the delivery mold **44** is moved from its FIG. 2 position at the quench station **46** to below the second upper mold **40** to receive the glass sheet as shown in FIG. 8 as the vacuum is terminated at the second upper mold so the glass sheet drops onto the delivery mold which is then moved by its actuator **84** and connection **85**

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out of the forming station for delivery of the pressed formed glass sheet such as by quenching in the quench station **46** between lower and upper quench heads **86** and **87** as shown in FIG. 2.

A controller **88** shown in FIG. 1 has a bundle of connections **90** that operate the roll conveyor **26**, the first upper mold **38**, the second upper mold **40**, the lower mold **42**, the delivery mold **44**, the gas lift jet array **58**, the vacuum source **78** and the quench station **46** to perform the press forming of the glass sheet, its delivery and quenching.

During development of the forming station **30**, the inventors have determined that glass sheet forming with transverse curvature upon initial forming on an upper mold can cause buckling at the central viewing area of the glass sheet due to excess glass at the glass sheet periphery when the flat glass sheet assumes the curvature in crossing directions with no straight line elements, and such buckling results in distorted optics as to transmission and/or reflection in the central viewing area of the glass. It has also been determined that use of a first upper mold with straight line elements during the initial stage of forming, then allowing the gravity sag forming on the lower mold to begin the transverse curvature, and subsequently performing the final press forming of the glass sheet reduces optical distortions both as to transmission and reflection in the central view area of the formed glass sheet.

Also, for purposes of this application, the term "straight line elements" means straight lines between two opposite extremities of the first upper mold surface **52** and of the glass sheet after the first stage of forming, which straight lines have midpoints from which the mold surface and initially formed glass sheet are spaced no more than about 0.5%, and preferably no more than about 0.3%, of the distance between the extremities.

In the three stage forming station disclosed, the vacuum source **78** shown in FIG. 2 is operated by the controller **88** shown in FIG. 1 through the bundle of connections **90** to provide a vacuum to the downwardly facing surface **52** of the first upper mold in order to cooperate with the gas lift jet array **58** in lifting the glass sheet **G** from the roll conveyor **26** into contact with the first upper mold at its downwardly facing surface **52** for initially forming and support of the glass sheet. After the glass sheet **G** is moved upwardly and contacts the downwardly facing surface **52** of the first upper mold, the controller **88** disclosed terminates the operation of the gas lift jet array **58** while continuing to provide the vacuum that is then the sole support of the glass sheet on the first upper mold.

As illustrated in FIG. 5, the lower mold **42** has a ring shape that defines the upwardly concave shape in transverse directions complementary to the downwardly facing convex shape of the second upper mold surface **70**. This ring shape of the lower mold **42** defines an open center **92** so as to contact the glass sheet at its periphery and allow gravity sagging; however, in order to control the gravity sagging of the glass sheet during its transfer between the first and second upper molds **38** and **40**, the lower mold **42** may be provided with one or more pads **94** in its open center.

The manner in which the forming apparatus is constructed and operates to initially form the glass sheets with straight line elements at the first stage of forming, begin the transverse curvature by the gravity sagging on the lower mold and subsequently completing the transverse curvature by the press forming reduces central deformation of the formed glass both as to transmission and reflection at its central viewing area. More specifically, during the first stage of forming on the first upper mold, the formed glass sheet with

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straight line elements only has curvature between the end portions **96** of the first upper mold **38** so that initially there is no excess peripheral glass for causing deformation. Subsequent gravity sagging of the initially formed glass sheet on the lower mold initiates the transverse forming without forcing deformation of the glass due to the excess peripheral glass as the glass forms transversely. During the final press forming on the second upper mold **40** shown in FIG. 4, the end portions **100** and side portions **102** of the lower mold **42** shown in FIG. 5 press the glass sheet against the downwardly facing surface **70** of the second upper mold **40** to provide the final transverse curvature of the glass sheet with decreased distortion in the central viewing area of the formed glass sheet.

When the glass sheet has a generally rectangular shape, the initial forming will be in a cylindrical shape, and when the glass sheet is of a generally trapezoidal shape the initial forming will be of a partial conical shape, both of which have straight line elements so there is no excess glass sheet at the periphery of the glass sheet during the first stage of forming. As described above, the subsequent gravity sag forming on the lower mold to start forming the transverse curvature and the final press forming complete the glass sheet forming with transverse curvature with reduced central viewing area distortion.

With reference to FIG. 9, the gas lift jet array **58** disclosed includes a pair of end portions **104** that are aligned with the end portions **G'** of the glass sheet to initially provide their lifting and support on the first upper mold **38**, and the gas lift jet array also includes a central portion **108** having a pair of branches **110** for providing the support and lifting of the intermediate portion **G''** of the glass sheet. Pressurized gas that is heated during its flow into and then through a heating path in the heated chamber supply conduits **112** that supply pressurized gas to the end portions **104** and conduits **114** that supply pressurized gas to the central portion **108** in both of its branches **110**. A control generally indicated by **116** includes valves **118** that adjustably control the pressure supplied to the conduits **112** feeding the end portions **104** and the control **116** also includes valves **120** that adjustably control the gas pressure supplied to the branches **110** of the central portion **108**. Of course, the valving and control for supplying the gas array end portions **104** and the central portion **108** can also be constructed in different ways than the specific way shown to adjustably control the amount of lifting and support at the end portions and intermediate portion of the glass sheet. This operation takes place after the downward movement of the first upper mold to receive the glass sheet for the first stage of forming and can then be terminated while the vacuum continues to be drawn at the first upper mold surface to continue the support of the glass sheet. The vacuum is continued until release of the glass sheet onto the lower mold **42** and such termination may be accompanied by supply of positive pressure air supplied by the gas jet pump **80**.

With reference to the flow chart of FIG. 10, the press forming operation begins by the heating **122** of the glass sheet **G** in the furnace and its subsequent conveyance **124** after heating into the forming station to begin the press forming operation. Then the downward movement of the first upper mold as illustrated at **126** and its receipt of the glass sheet **G** for the initial forming with curvature in the first direction and straight line elements in the second transverse direction is followed by the first upper mold and glass sheet upward movement **128** and subsequently by the lower mold movement **130** under the raised first upper mold and release of the glass sheet onto the lower mold for the

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gravity sagging that starts the transverse curvature. The lower mold and initially formed glass sheet are then moved as shown by **132** to below the second upper mold which is then moved downwardly as shown by **134** to press form the initially formed glass sheet with transverse curvature. The second upper mold is then moved upwardly as shown at **136** and the lower mold is moved out from below the second upper mold, followed by the delivery mold movement **138** below the second upper mold to receive the formed glass sheet for delivery. The downward second upper mold movement shown by **134** initiates the press forming of the glass sheet with the lower mold as vacuum is supplied to the second upper mold to provide the press forming in transverse directions with optics that are enhanced by the initial forming of the glass sheet with straight line elements followed by the gravity sagging before the press forming.

With reference to FIG. 11, another embodiment of a three stage forming station **30'** is constructed according to the present invention and has many of the same components that operate like those of the previously described embodiment such that like references numerals are applied to like components and much of the previous description is applicable and thus will not be repeated.

In the forming station **30'** illustrated in FIGS. 11-13, a heated glass sheet **G** on the conveyor **26** is received by the first mold **38** and moved horizontally from its pickup position shown in FIG. 11 to a delivery position shown in FIG. 12 where the lower mold **42** is located, which is different from the prior embodiment wherein the lower mold provides the horizontal movement. As such, while there is gravity sagging on the lower mold in this embodiment, there is less time for such gravity sagging so that the shape can be more accurately controlled. After the glass sheet is deposited on the lower mold **42** by the first upper mold **38**, the first upper mold **38** moves back from its delivery position of FIG. 12 to its pickup position of FIG. 11 and the second upper mold **40** moves downwardly as shown in FIG. 13 to cooperate with the lower mold in press forming the glass sheet as previously described. After the press forming, the second upper mold **40** moves upwardly with the glass sheet supported against its downwardly facing surface **70** by a drawn vacuum as previously described and the delivery mold **44** shown in FIG. 11 is moved from the quench station **46** into the forming station **30'** to receive the glass sheet for movement back out to the quench station between the lower and upper quench heads **86** and **87** for quenching also as previously described.

As shown in FIG. 11, the first upper mold **38** has a frame **38'** that is supported by elongated beams **140** that are moved by an actuator **142** through a connection **144**. These beams **140** are supported by associated rollers **146** that are mounted by actuators **148** to provide vertical movement of the beams and hence vertical movement of the first upper mold **38** during its operation. More specifically, the first upper mold **38** can be moved downwardly to about one half inch (12 to 15 mm) from the conveyor **26** for the initial pickup of the glass sheet and can then be moved upwardly so as to move above drive mechanism covers **150** located at the ends of the conveyor rolls **28** to reduce heat flow from the interior of the forming station to the factory ambient. Lateral rollers **152** also contact the elongated beams to provide lateral positioning during movement of the first upper mold **38** between its pickup position shown in FIG. 11 and its delivery position shown in FIG. 12.

The forming station **30'** illustrated in FIGS. 11-13 thus also has three stages of operation wherein the glass sheet is formed on the first upper mold **38** with curvature in a first

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direction and straight line elements in a second direction transverse to the first direction, by gravity on the lower mold **42** after receipt thereby from the first upper mold **38** in its delivery position shown in FIG. **12**, and finally by the press forming between the second upper mold **40** and the lower mold **42** as shown in FIG. **13**.

The lower mold **42** as illustrated is supported by a framework **154** that is supported by actuators **156**, such as screw jacks, for vertical movement. This vertical movement can be downward to allow the first upper mold **38** to move over the lower mold **42** and then upward so that the release of the glass sheet is at a more closely spaced relationship to control positioning. In addition, the vertical movement of the lower mold **42** can also be used in cooperation with the vertical movement of the second upper mold **40** to perform the press bending.

With reference to the flow chart of FIG. **14**, the embodiment of FIGS. **11-13** performs the press forming operation beginning by the heating **158** of the glass sheet **G** in the furnace and its subsequent conveyance **160** into the forming station, followed by the first upper mold receiving the glass sheet from the conveyance for initial forming with straight line elements in the first stage, and then the horizontal movement **164** of the first upper mold and the glass sheet to above the lower mold. Then, the glass sheet release **166** from the first upper mold onto the lower mold provides gravity sagging in the second stage which can be performed in a shorter time than when the lower mold moves horizontally, and the second upper mold is moved downwardly at **168** to the lower mold for press forming with transverse curvature in the third stage, and the second upper mold and glass sheet are moved upwardly at **170** followed by the delivery mold movement **172** below the second upper mold to receive the press formed glass sheet and then move it out of the forming station for delivery.

Both embodiments can have reduced cycle time by the vertical positioning of the constructions disclosed. In the embodiment of FIGS. **1-10**, the vertical positioning permits both the lower mold **42** and the delivery mold **44** to be below the second upper mold **40** at the same time so successive cycles overlap to reduce cycle time. In the embodiment of FIGS. **11-14**, the vertical positioning permits both the first upper mold **38** and the delivery mold **44** to be below the second upper mold **40** at the same time so successive cycles overlap to reduce cycle time.

In both embodiments, it is also possible to assist the lift jets with mechanical pressing of the glass sheet against the first upper mold **38** at its downwardly facing surface **52** so as to ensure completed glass contact therewith even with abrupt curvature at one or more locations. This type of pressing can be performed by having a press member, or a pair of press members, mounted on the first upper mold **38** and operated by the controller **88** through an actuator(s) that extends between the upper mold and the press member which may pivot or otherwise move relative to the upper mold. See U.S. Pat. No. 4,514,208 Nitschke, which discloses mechanical pressing against an upper mold.

All of the previously mentioned patents are assigned to the applicant of the present application and are hereby incorporated by reference.

While exemplary embodiments are described above, it is not intended that these embodiments describe all possible forms of the invention. Rather, the words used in the specification are words of description rather than limitation, and it is understood that various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

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Additionally, the features of various implementing embodiments may be combined to form further embodiments of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A three stage forming station for forming a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature comprising:
 - a housing having a heated chamber;
 - a roll conveyor for conveying the hot glass sheet into the heated chamber of the housing along a horizontal plane of conveyance;
 - a downwardly facing first upper mold, that has a pickup position above the roll conveyor in the heated chamber and that has curvature in a first direction and straight line elements in a second direction transverse to the first direction, for initially forming the glass sheet with curvature in the first direction while maintaining straight line elements in the second direction;
 - an upwardly facing lower mold, that is located in the heated chamber spaced horizontally from the pickup position of the first upper mold and that has curvature in the first direction and permits glass sheet curvature in the second direction, for receiving the glass sheet from the first upper mold in a delivery position thereof above the lower mold so the glass sheet sags under gravity along the second direction to have some curvature in the second direction as well as curvature in the first direction;
 - a downwardly facing second upper mold, that is located in the heated chamber above the lower mold and has transverse curvature and is complementary to the upwardly facing lower mold, for cooperating with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with transverse curvature corresponding to the shapes of the lower mold and the second upper mold;
 - elongated beams that support the first upper mold;
 - rollers that support the elongated beams and the first upper mold thereon for horizontal movement within the heated chamber;
 - a horizontal actuator that moves the elongated beams horizontally on the rollers to move the first upper mold horizontally between the pickup position above the roll conveyor and the delivery position above the lower mold;
 - a gas lift jet array located below the plane of conveyance to supply upwardly directed lift jets for lifting the glass sheet upwardly from the roll conveyor to the first upper mold when located in its pickup position to initially form and support the glass sheet on the first upper mold;
 - vertical actuators that move the rollers, the elongated beams on the rollers, and the first upper mold vertically in the pickup position first downwardly toward the roll conveyor to facilitate the lifting of the glass sheet from the conveyor to the first upper mold and then upwardly to facilitate movement of the first upper mold on the elongated beams to the delivery position;
 - a vacuum source for drawing a vacuum at the first upper mold to support the initially formed glass sheet on the first upper mold for its movement from the pickup position to the delivery position where its vacuum is terminated to release the glass sheet onto the lower mold;
 - the second upper mold being movable downwardly from an upper position to cooperate with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with curvature in transverse directions, and the second upper mold being subsequently movable upwardly to the upper position with

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the press formed glass sheet supported on the second upper mold by vacuum drawn by the vacuum source; a delivery mold that is movable to below the press formed glass sheet on the second upper mold in its upper position whereupon its vacuum is terminated and the glass sheet is released from the second upper mold onto the delivery mold which is then moved out of the forming station for delivery of the press formed glass sheet; and

a controller that operates the roll conveyor, the first upper mold, the gas lift jet array, the second upper mold, the vacuum source, and the delivery mold to perform the press forming of the glass sheet and its delivery.

2. A three stage forming station as in claim 1 wherein the controller is configured to operate the vacuum source to provide a vacuum to the first upper mold and thereby cooperate with the gas lift jet array in lifting the glass sheet from the roll conveyor into contact with the first upper mold for initial forming and support of the glass sheet.

3. A three stage forming station as in claim 2 wherein the controller is configured so after the glass sheet is moved upwardly and contacts the first upper mold, it terminates the operation of the gas lift jet array while continuing to operate the vacuum source to provide the vacuum that is then the sole support of the glass sheet on the first upper mold.

4. A three stage forming station as in claim 1 wherein lower mold has a ring shape that supports the glass sheet as it sags by gravity.

5. A three stage forming station as in claim 4 wherein the lower mold includes a support pad within its ring shape to control sagging of the glass sheet.

6. A three stage forming station as in claim 1 further including lateral rollers that contact the elongated beams to provide lateral positioning during movement of the first upper mold between its pickup position and its delivery position.

7. A three stage forming station as in claim 1 further including screw jacks for moving the lower mold vertically.

8. A three stage forming station as in claim 1 further including a quench station to which the delivery mold moves the press formed glass sheet for quenching.

9. A three stage forming station for forming a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature comprising:

a housing having a heated chamber;
a roll conveyor for conveying the hot glass sheet into the heated chamber of the housing along a horizontal plane of conveyance;

a downwardly facing first upper mold, that has a pickup position above the roll conveyor in the heated chamber and that has curvature in a first direction and straight line elements in a second direction transverse to the first direction, for initially forming the glass sheet with curvature in the first direction while maintaining straight line elements in the second direction;

an upwardly facing lower mold of a ring shape, that is located in the heated chamber spaced horizontally from the pickup position of the first upper mold and that has curvature in the first direction and permits glass sheet curvature in the second direction, for receiving the glass sheet from the first upper mold in a delivery position thereof above the lower mold so the glass sheet sags under gravity along the second direction to have some curvature in the second direction as well as curvature in the first direction, and the lower mold having a support pad within its ring shape to control sagging of the glass sheet;

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a downwardly facing second upper mold, that is located in the heated chamber above the lower mold and has transverse curvature and is complementary to the upwardly facing lower mold, for cooperating with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with transverse curvature corresponding to the shapes of the lower mold and the second upper mold;

elongated beams that support the first upper mold;

rollers that support the elongated beams and the first upper mold thereon for horizontal movement within the heated chamber;

a horizontal actuator that moves the elongated beams horizontally on the rollers to move the first upper mold horizontally between the pickup position above the roll conveyor and the delivery position above the lower mold;

a gas lift jet array located below the plane of conveyance to supply upwardly directed lift jets for lifting the glass sheet upwardly from the roll conveyor to the first upper mold when located in its pickup position to initially form and support the glass sheet on the first upper mold;

vertical actuators that move the rollers, the elongated beams on the rollers, and the first upper mold vertically in the pickup position first downwardly toward the roll conveyor to facilitate the lifting of the glass sheet from the conveyor to the first upper mold and then upwardly to facilitate movement of the first upper mold on the elongated beams to the delivery position;

a vacuum source for drawing a vacuum at the first upper mold to support the initially formed glass sheet on the first upper mold for its movement from the pickup position to the delivery position where its vacuum is terminated to release the glass sheet onto the lower mold;

the second upper mold being movable downwardly from an upper position to cooperate with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with curvature in transverse directions, and the second upper mold being subsequently movable upwardly to the upper position with the press formed glass sheet supported on the second upper mold by vacuum drawn by the vacuum source;

a delivery mold that is movable to below the press formed glass sheet on the second upper mold in its upper position whereupon its vacuum is terminated and the glass sheet is released from the second upper mold onto the delivery mold which is then moved out of the forming station for delivery of the press formed glass sheet; and

a controller that operates the roll conveyor, the first upper mold, the gas lift jet array, the second upper mold, the vacuum source, and the delivery mold to perform the press forming of the glass sheet and its delivery.

10. A three stage forming station for forming a hot glass sheet with transverse curvature comprising:

a housing having a heated chamber;

a roll conveyor for conveying the hot glass sheet into the heated chamber of the housing along a horizontal plane of conveyance;

a downwardly facing first upper mold, that has a pickup position above the roll conveyor in the heated chamber and that has curvature in a first direction and straight line elements in a second direction transverse to the first direction, for initially forming the glass sheet with curvature in the first direction while maintaining straight line elements in the second direction;

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an upwardly facing lower mold of a ring shape, that is located in the heated chamber spaced horizontally from the pickup position of the first upper mold and that has curvature in the first direction and permits glass sheet curvature in the second direction, for receiving the glass sheet from the first upper mold in a delivery position thereof above the lower mold so the glass sheet sags under gravity along the second direction to have some curvature in the second direction as well as curvature in the first direction, and the lower mold having a support pad within its ring shape to control sagging of the glass sheet;

a downwardly facing second upper mold, that is located in the heated chamber above the lower mold and has transverse curvature and is complementary to the upwardly facing lower mold, for cooperating with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with transverse curvature corresponding to the shapes of the lower mold and the second upper mold;

elongated beams that support the first upper mold;

rollers that support the elongated beams and the first upper mold thereon for horizontal movement within the heated chamber;

a horizontal actuator that moves the elongated beams horizontally on the rollers to move the first upper mold horizontally between the pickup position above the roll conveyor and the delivery position above the lower mold;

a gas lift jet array located below the plane of conveyance to supply upwardly directed lift jets for lifting the glass sheet upwardly from the roll conveyor to the first upper mold when located in its pickup position to initially form and support the glass sheet on the first upper mold;

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vertical actuators that move the rollers, the elongated beams on the rollers, and the first upper mold vertically in the pickup position first downwardly toward the roll conveyor to facilitate the lifting of the glass sheet from the conveyor to the first upper mold and then upwardly to facilitate movement of the first upper mold on the elongated beams to the delivery position;

a vacuum source for drawing a vacuum at the first upper mold to support the initially formed glass sheet on the first upper mold for its movement from the pickup position to the delivery position where its vacuum is terminated to release the glass sheet onto the lower mold;

the second upper mold being movable downwardly from an upper position to cooperate with the lower mold to press form the glass sheet with curvature in transverse directions, and the second upper mold being subsequently movable upwardly to the upper position with the press formed glass sheet supported on the second upper mold by vacuum drawn by the vacuum source;

a delivery mold that is movable to below the press formed glass sheet on the second upper mold in its upper position whereupon its vacuum is terminated and the glass sheet is released from the second upper mold onto the delivery mold which is then moved out of the forming station for delivery of the press formed glass sheet;

a quench station to which the delivery mold moves the press formed glass sheet for quenching; and

a controller that operates the roll conveyor, the first upper mold, the gas lift jet array, the second upper mold, the vacuum source, the delivery mold to perform the press forming of the glass sheet and its delivery, and the quench station.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 9,452,948 B2
APPLICATION NO. : 14/174265
DATED : September 27, 2016
INVENTOR(S) : Dean M. Nitschke et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

In the Claims

Column 11, Line 28, Claim 4:

After "claim 42 wherein"

Insert -- the --.

Signed and Sealed this
Third Day of January, 2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michelle K. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Michelle K. Lee
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office